

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

AID-05 PC-01 /062 W

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R 231052Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 96

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 1302

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - P A R A N B R T H R E E

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL CAMPAIGN CLOSE-UP: CHONBURI ELECTORAL  
DISTRICT ONE

SUMMARY:

CHONBURI IS A MEDIUM-SIZED PROVINCE WHICH QUALIFIED FOR FOUR  
PARLIAMENTARY SEATS AND IS DIVIDED INTO TWO ELECTORAL DISTRICTS.  
TWO MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE CLASHED HEAD ON IN ELECTORAL  
DISTRICT ONE IN A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO ELIMINATE THE PRIME  
MINISTERIAL HOPES OF ONE CANDIDATE. THIS IS BY FAR THE MOST  
EXPENSIVE SINGLE CAMPAIGN IN THE COUNTRY. THE PROTAGONISTS  
ARE UTHAI PHIMCHAICHON (DEMOCRAT), SIRI SIRIYOTHIN (THAI  
NATION), AND BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN (SOCIAL ACTION PARTY).  
AS THE POLLS ARE ABOUT TO OPEN THE WINNERS ARE ANYBODY'S GUESS.

END SUMMARY.

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1. CHONBURI PROVINCE IS BEST KNOWN FOR ITS PATTHAYA BEACH RESORT AREA, RATHER THAN AS A POLITICAL BATTLEGROUND. THE TOTAL PROVINCIAL POPULATION, AS OF SEPTEMBER 1974, WAS JUST OVER 627,000. ITS 300,000 ELIGIBLE VOTERS ARE DIVIDED INTO TWO ELECTORAL DISTRICTS EACH OF WHICH WILL RETURN TWO PARLIAMENTARIANS. THIS IS ONE MORE SEATBMVER ITS 1969 REPRESENTATION. IN 1969 THE PEOPLE OF CHONBURI ELECTED UNAFFILIATED CANDIDATE PRASONG NUNGCHAMONGN DEMOCRAT UTHAI PHIMCHAICHON, AND UNITED THAI PEOPLE'S PARTY SIRI SIRIYOTHIN. SIRI BECAME SPEAKER OF THE 1969-71 PARLIAMENT.

I. CANDIDATES

2. THE DEMOCRAT PARTY IS RUNNING UTHAI PHIMCHAICHON AND SALAP WISUTTHIMAK. UTHAI WAS ELECTED FROM CHONBURI IN 1969 WITH THE SECOND HIGHEST VOTE TATAL. THE MILITARY COUP AGAINST THE PARLIAMENT IN NOVEMBER 1971 CUT SHORT HIS POLITICAL CAREER. IN EARLY 1972 HE GOT TOGETHER WITH TWO FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS AND FILED A SUIT AGAINST THE RULING NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC), CHARGING TREASON FOR ITS SCRAPPING OF THE 1968 CONSTITUTION AND PARLIAMTNT. THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF CHARGED THE THREE EX-MP'S AND INCARCERATED THEM IN THE BAN KHUANG DETENTION CENTER. THE POST-OCTOBER 1973 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PASSED A SPECIAL BILL IN JANUARY 1974 RELEASING THE THREE MEN. UTHAI RETURNED TO CHONBURI AND BEGAN HIS CAMPAIGN. HE IS 36 YEARS OLD. HIS RUNNING MATE WAS THE FORMER CHIEF OF THE DETENTION CENTER. SALAP IS IN HIS 50'.

3. THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP) IS ONLY RUNNING ITS SECRETARY-GENERAL BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN IN DISTRICT ONE, WHICH COVERS THE NORTHERN PART OF CHONBURI PROVINCE AND INCLUDES PHANTHONG, PHANATNIKHON, AND MUANG DISTRICTS. BUNCHU IS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BANGKOK BANK. A RANKING SAP MEMBER TOLD US THAT BEFORE THE CAMPAIGN STARTED SAP DETERMINED THAT THE THAI NATION PARTY WAS ITS GREATEST COMPETITION. IT ALSO FELT THAT SIRI HAD A BETTER CHANCE OF BECOMING A THAI NATION PRIME MINISTER THAN PARTY LEADER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN. IT JUDGED SIRI THE BETTER LEADER OF THE TWO BECAUSE OF HIS DEMOSTRATED CAPABILITY TO GET ALONG WITH

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DIFFEYING PEOPLE IN HIS PREVIOUS POSITION AS ASSEMBLY SPEAKER. SAP FELT THAT DEFEATING SIRI AT THE POLLS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED ITS CHANCES TO PUT PARTY LEADER M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S CHAIR. BUNCHU COULD HAVE RUN IN METROPOLITAN BANGKOK AND EASILY WON, BUT HE TOOK THE ASSIGNMENT OF FACING OFF WITH SIRE. HE TURNED 53 YEARS OLD DURING THE CAMPAIGN ON JANUARY 20.

4. THE THAI NATION PARTY IS ONLY RUNNING SIRI SIRIYOTHIN, DEPUTY PARTY LEADER, IN CHONBURI DISTRICT ONE. SIRI TOLD US THAT HE PICKED DISTRICT ONE BECAUSE IT INCLUDED HIS BIRTHPLACE AND HIS EXTENSIVE FARM, EVEN THOUGH HE ALWAYS RAN BETTER IN OTHER SECTIONS OF THE PROVINCE. SIRI HAS BEEN ELECTED FROM CHONBURI THREE TIMES. HE ONCE HELD A CABINET POSITION UNDER FIELD MARSHAL PHIBUNSONGKHRAM. HE IS 59 YEARS OLD.

### III. THE CAMPAIGN

5. THE CHONBURI DISTRICT ONE CAMPAIGN IS PURE MONEY AND PERSONALITY; NO ISSUES. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST LAVISH CAMPAIGNS IN THE COUNTRY. DEMOCRAT UTHAI IS AT A DISTINCT DISADVANTAGE IN A HEAVILY MONEYED CAMPAIGN. NEVERTHELESS HE HAS THE MARTYR ISSUE. AT FIRST UTHAI'S STRATEGY WAS NOT TO FIGHT THE OTHER TWO CANDIDATES. HE WOULD APPEAR BEFORE AUDIENCES WHICH HE KNEW SUPPORTED SAP, AND PRAISE BUNCHU, REMINDING THE VILLAGERS ALSO TO VOTE FOR HIM. WITH SIRI SYMPATHIZERS HE USED THE SAME TECHNIQUE. WHOMEVER THE VILLAGERS PICKED BETWEEN BUNCHU AND SIRI, UTHAI HOPED TO COLLECT A VOTE. UTHAI'S POPULARITY ALSO STEMMED FROM HIS WILLINGNESS TO CRITICIZE OFFICIALS WHO ABUSED AUTHORITY. UTHAI TURNED HIS CRITICISMS ON BUNCHU AND SIRI TOWARD THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN. THESE HEAVY HANDED PERSONAL ATTACKS, HOWEVER, HAVE COST HIM SOME SUPPORT. HE IS PARTICULARLY IN TROUBLE FOR AUTHORIZING THE DISTRIBUTION OF A SLANDEROUS POSTER ATTACKING BUNCHU.

6. BUNCHU'S CAMPAIGN MAY BE THE MOST EXPENSIVE IN THE COUNTRY. HUGE BILLBOARDS FEATURING HIS PICTURE LITTER THE PROVINCE. THERE IS HARDLY A WALL OR FENCE IN THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL THAT DOES NOT HAVE SEVERAL POSTERS

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OF BUNCHU BEAMING AT THE ELECTORATE THROUGH HIS THICK HORN-RIMMED GLASSES. HE HAS REPORTEDLY PAID FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF OVER 100 KILOMETERS OF ROADS IN THE VILLAGES DURING THE CAMPAIGN. OF COURSE SIRI HAS HAD TO RESPOND IN KIND, OR BLACKTOP BUNCHU'S ORIGINAL LATERITE. INFREQUENTLY A SIGN WILL APPEAR NEXT TO THESE NEW ROADS PROCLAIMING (FALSELY) THAT THE LARGESSE IS FROM UTHAI. BUNCHU HAS ALSO LINED UP MANY OF THE MERCHANTS IN TOWN WHOSE EYES PROBABLY HAVE THE GLINT OF LOW INTEREST INVESTMENT LOANS FROM BUNCHU'S BANGKOK BANK. UNQUOTE

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ACTION EA-10

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NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

AID-05 PC-01 /062 W

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R 231052Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 97

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 BANGKOK 1302

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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL CAMPAIGN CLOSE-UP: CHONBURI ELECTORAL  
DISTRICT ONE

7. BUNCHU'S BIGGEST MISTAKE APPARENTLY HAS BEEN TO HIRE  
GANGSTERS AS SOME OF HIS WARDMEN. THE FEAR AMONG THE PEOPLE,  
ACCORDING TO THE MUANG DISTRICT OFFICER, IS THAT IF BUNCHU  
IS ELECTED THE GANGSTERS WILL REMAIN AND EXERCISE AUTHORITY  
ON BUNCHU'S BEHALF IN CHONBURI.

8. SIRI, LIKE UTHAI, IS THE LOCAL BOY IN THE CONTEST UNDER  
ATTACK FROM INTERLOPER BUNCHU. SIRI HAS RESPONDED WITH  
AN EQUALLY WELL-FINANCED CAMPAIGN. HIS WARDMEN, HOWEVER,  
ARE PREDOMINANTLY LOCAL PEOPLE.

9. THE STAKES IN THIS CAMPAIGN ARE HIGH AND THE PRESSURES  
ENORMOUS. WE DISCOVERED DURING A RECENT VISIT THAT, DESPITE  
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR REGULATIONS PRESCRIBING NEUTRALITY  
FOR ITS OFFICIALS. BUNCHU'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, THEPARIT  
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KRAIRONARIT, IS THEMUANG DISTRICT OFFICER'S HOUSE GUEST. FOR HIS PART THEPARIT EXPRESSED TO US CONCERN OVER THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ARMY UNIT STATIONED IN CHONBURI MILITARY DISTRICT. APPARENTLY THE UNIT SUDDENLY WENT TO NAN PROVINCE IN NORTH THAILAND. THEPARIT SAW THE POSSIBILITY FOR ABSENTEE BLOC VOTING IN SIRI'S FAVOR.

10. THE SAP CAMPAIGNERS HAVE RELIED ON PUBLIC OPINION POLLS TO DIRECT THEIR CANDIDATE'S ACTIVITIES. W8TH ABOUT ONE WEEK LEFT IN THE CAMPAIGN, NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED POLL RESULTS WHICH SEEMED TO COME FROM SAP SOURCES BUT WHICH SAID THAT BUNCHU WAS BEHIND. A RANKING SAP MEMBER EXPLAINED TO US THAT SAP HAD LEAKED THE POLLS TO THE PRESS TO ACCOMPLISH TWO PURPOSES -- TAKE ADVANTAGE TO THAI SYMPATHY FOR THE UNDERDOG AND FORESTALL THE OTHER CANDIDATES FORM GANGING UP ON BUNCHU.

11. SIRI SEEMS TO HAVE DRAWN LESS CRITICISM THAN BUNCHU DURING THE CAMPAIGN. LOCAL OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE SPOKE GAVE SIRI A SLIGHT EDGE OVER BUNCHU WHILE CONCEDED THE OTHER SEAT TO UTHAW. THIS RACE WILL BE A SQUEAKER, HOWEVER, AND ANY TWO OF THE THREE MEN MAY WIN IN DISTRICT ONE.

#### V. COMMENT

12. THIS CLOSE AND EXPENSIVE CAMPAIGN IS THE DIRECT RESULT OF A DELIBERATE SAP DECISION TO ELIMINATE SIRI AS A PRIME MINISTERIAL CONTENDER. DESPITE THE UNDERLYING POLITICAL MOTIVES, THE CAMPAIGN IS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY AND MONEY IN THAI ELECTIONS. THERE ARE NO RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDATES IN THAI ELECTIONS, THERE ARE NO RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDATES IN THAI ELECTIONS, AND MANY WINNERS IN PAST THAI ELECTIONS HAVE HARDLY EVEN BEEN IN THEIR DISTRICTS. IF BUNCHU LOSES IT WILL BE BECAUSE THE VOTERS SAW HIM AS THE INTERLOPER.  
KINTNER

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, POLITICAL LEADERS, POLITICAL PARTIES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 23 JAN 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** CunninFX  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975BANGKO01302  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750026-0561  
**From:** BANGKOK  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750128/aaaaayhc.tel  
**Line Count:** 260  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** CunninFX  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 23 JUL 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <23 JUL 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <20 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PROVINCIAL CAMPAIGN CLOSE-UP: CHONBURI ELECTORAL DISTRICT ONE  
**TAGS:** PGOV, PINT, TH  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006